



Coral Reef Task Force Passes Water Quality Resolution



Corals thrive in warm clear waters that are low in nutrients. The CRTF resolution calls for improved water quality conditions in the Florida Keys.

On February 27, 2003 the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force passed the “Wider Caribbean Water Quality Resolution”, which addresses how water quality affects coral reefs in Florida, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The resolution specifically refers to the cesspits, septic tanks, and shallow water injection wells that exist in the Florida Keys, noting that they are responsible for “inadequately treated, nutrient-rich wastewater entry into the nearshore coral reef system, the vitality of which is based on maintaining nutrient-poor waters”. The resolution adds that “the coral reef ecosystem of the Keys receives water from the South Florida watershed, and implementation of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) is needed to improve the quality, quantity, and timing of water flow to these areas.” “This helps highlight the many problems facing the Keys reefs,” said Katherine “Kacky” Andrews, Sanctuary Co-trustee for the State of Florida, who led the effort to get the resolution passed.

The resolution, drafted by NOAA, the State of Florida, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands, calls for resources to be applied to solve wastewater problems and for CERP to be implemented to benefit the coral reefs of the Keys. For more information, visit the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force home page: www.coralreef.gov.

*Note: This article appeared in the Spring/Summer 2003 issue of the newsletter of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, **Sounding Line**. For more information, visit: floridakeys.noaa.gov.*

Purpose of the Coral Reef Task Force

The United States is one of many nations around the world working to halt the coral reef crisis and protect, restore and sustainably use coral reef ecosystems for current and future generations.

The U.S. Coral Reef Task Force (CRTF) was established in June 1998 through Executive Order #13089 on Coral Reef Protection to lead the U.S. response to this growing, global environmental crisis. The CRTF is responsible for overseeing implementation of the Executive Order, and developing and implementing coordinated efforts to:

- map and monitor U.S. coral reefs;
- research the causes and solutions to coral reef degradation;
- reduce and mitigate coral reef degradation from pollution, over fishing and other causes;
- implement strategies to promote conservation and sustainable use of coral reefs internationally.

For a full description of the CRTF mission and duties, please see Executive Order 13089 on Coral Reef Protection.

Note: This information was taken directly from the Coral Reef Task Force web site. For more information, visit: www.coralreef.gov.